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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000250

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TAGS: PGOV PREL IZ

SUBJECT: VP ADEL ON LTSR AND PENDING LEGISLATION

REF: BAGHDAD 224 (ADEL ON LTSR)

Classified By: PolCounselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi told Political Counselor on January 28 that the GOI Political Committee for National Security (PCNS) discussed the GOI long-term strategic partnership (LTSR) negotiating framework during a January 26 meeting, agreeing that negotiations would be handled at the deputy minister level under supervision by Prime Minister Maliki and top-tier GOI officials with frequent PCNS consultation. He noted Iraqi unease over recent American media reports of preliminary opposition to LTSR expressed by some members of the U.S. Congress. On legislative issues, Adel predicted the 2008 budget would be passed after "useless delay" caused by Maliki; complained that progress on the Provincial Powers law has been slowed by unresolved disputes between Adel's Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and Maliki's Dawa Party; and said fellow VP Tariq al-Hashemi had sent him a letter regarding the De-Baathification Law. End Summary.

LTSR

¶2. (C) Adel characterized the January 26 PCNS as a productive meeting attended by all major political blocs and players except for the Sadrist, who are "boycotting" the PCNS (reftel), and former PM al-Jaffri. The only topic discussed was the GOI long-term strategic partnership (LTSR) negotiating framework, with agreement that day-to-day negotiations would be led by the Deputy Foreign Minister and his team of deputy minister-level officials. This team will be supervised by the Prime Minister, members of the Presidency Council, and Ministers. The PCNS will be briefed and consulted regularly on developments. A PCNS "secretariat" likely to be headed by senior KDP official Rawsch Shways will support this advisory function. Adel stressed that all political parties will be encouraged to actively participate in this PCNS advisory role so that the agreement will gain CoR ratification and popular support. Adel said all party blocs present at the January 26 PCNS were positive about the LTSR. He dismissed likely Sadrist opposition by stating that the GOI will never get 100 percent support for any project but will have to persuade the Iraqi people, the Sadrist, and the Iranians, that the agreement is in Iraq's interests and does not merely provide legal cover for a continued presence of foreign forces. The PCNS did not discuss substantive LTSR issues.

¶3. (C) Adel once again praised S/I Satterfield's statements to the Arab media that the USG will not seek bases, adding that this helped dispel speculation and rumors among Iraqi politicians. He said it would be useful if a more senior USG official would go on record with similar assurances. Adel voiced concern over recent American media reports of preliminary opposition to LTSR expressed by some members of the U.S. Congress. He said the GOI needs assurance that an agreement will reflect the will of the entire USG, not just

part of it. We noted our wish that the agreement process be handled with maximum transparency throughout.

Budget, Provincial Powers, De-Baath

14. (C) Adel said budget discussions are "not mature" but predicted the CoR will eventually pass the budget "after more useless delay, and no one will be the winner." He described the holdup as a "small game played by the Prime Minister," adding that "Maliki sent a budget to parliament and then conspired against it." On the pending Provincial Powers bill, he noted unresolved disputes between his ISCI bloc and Maliki's Dawa Party over several items including the date upon which the enacted bill should take effect and the manner in which a provincial governor can be removed from office. In a separate January 27 meeting, senior Dawa CoR member Haidar al-Abadi told us the latter issue had been resolved in a "stormy" meeting between ISCI and Dawa, but the date of implementation issue was a new dispute that had not yet been bridged. Adel said the ISCI view is that the law should take effect when published, like any other law, while Abadi told us Dawa favors a delayed implementation date effective upon seating of new provincial councils. Both claim the Iraqi constitution is on their side.

15. (C) Adel said his office had not yet received a copy of the De-Baath law, and we related our understanding that the law was sent to him and the other two Presidency Council members on January 24, thus triggering the ten-day period (note: 15 day period according to an alternative legal reading) in which bills must be signed by the three Council members. Adel said he would sign upon receipt and would endeavor to persuade VP Hashemi to follow suit. He noted

BAGHDAD 00000250 002 OF 002

that Hashemi had sent him a letter outlining "comments" on the De-Baath law. In a subsequent conversation with Hashemi, he indicated that while he favors returning the law to the CoR for amendments, he would sign if both President Talabani and VP Abdel Mehdi held to the view that returning the law to the CoR would create problems.

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